

After he walketh softely a pas,
Compleynning, that hit pite was to here.
He seyde, O lady bright, Venus! alas!
That ever so wyde a compass is my spere!
Alas! when shal I mete yow, herte dere,
This twelfte day of April I endure,
Through jelous Phebus, this misaventure.

Now God helpe sely Venus allone!
But, as God wolde, hit happed for to be,
That, whyl that Venus weping made hir mone,
Cylenus, ryding in his chevauché,
fro Venus valance mighte his paleys see,
And Venus he salueth, and maketh chere,
And hir receyveth as his frend ful dere.

Mars dwelleth forth in his adversite,
Compleynning ever on hir departinge;
And what his compleynt was, remembreth me;
And therefore, in this lusty morweninge,
As I best can, I wol hit seyn and singe,
And after that I wol my leve take;
And God yewe every wight joye of his make!

THE COMPLEYNT OF MARS
The Proem of the Compleynt.

THE ordre of compleynt re-
quireth skilfully,
That if a wight shal pleyne
pitously,
Ther mot be cause wherfor
that men pleyne;
Or men may deme he pleyne
eth folly
And causeles; alas! that
am not I!

Wherfor the ground and cause of al my peyne,
So as my troubled wit may hit ateyne,
I wol reherse; not for to have redresse,
But to declare my ground of hevinesse.

IN the firste tyme, alas! that I
was wrought,
And for certeyn effectes
hider broght
By him that lordeth ech
intelligence,
I yaf my trewe servise and
my thought,
for evermore... how dere I
have hit boght!...

To hir, that is of so gret excellence,
That what wight that first sheweth his presence,
When she is wroth and taketh of him no cure,
He may not longe in joye of love endure.

This is no feyned mater that I telle;
My lady is the verrey sours and welle
Of beaute, lust, fredom, and gentillesse,
Of riche aray... how dere men hit selle!...
Of al disport in which men frendly dwelle,
Of love and pley, and of benigne humblesse,
Of soun of instruments of al swetnesse;
And therto so wel fortunéd and thewed,

That through the world hir goodnesse is shewed.

What wonder is then, thogh that I besette
My servise on suche oon, that may me knette
To wele or wo, sith hit lyth in hir might?
Therfor my herte for ever I to hir hette;
Ne trewly, for my dethe, I shal not lette
To ben hir trewest servaunt and hir knight,
I flater noght, that may wite every wight;
for this day in hir servise shal I dye;
But grace be, I see hir never with ye.

TO whom shal I than pleyne
of my distresse?
Who may me helpe, who
may my harm redresse?
Shal I compleyne unto my
lady free?
Nay, certes! for she hath
such hevinesse,
for fere and eek for wo,
that, as I gesse,
In litil tyme hit wol hir bane be.

But were she sauf, hit were no fors of me.
Alas! that ever lovers mote endure,
for love, so many a perilous aventure!

for thogh so be that lovers be as trewe
As any metel that is forged newe,
In many a cas hem tydeth ofte sorowe,
Somytyme hir ladies will not on hem rewe,
Somytyme, yif that jelousy hit knewe,
They mighten lightly leye hir heed to borowe;
Somytyme envyous folk with tungen horowe
Depraven hem; alas! whom may they please?
But he be fals, no lover hath his ese.

But what availleth suche a longe sermoun
Of adventures of love, up and down?
I wol retorne and speken of my peyne;
The point is this of my destruccioun,
My righte lady, my salvacioun,
Is in affray, and not to whom to pleyne.
O herte swete, O lady sovereyne!
for your disese, wel oghte I swoune and swelle,
Thogh I non other harm ne drede felte.

O what fyn made the god
that sit so hye,
Benethen him, love other
companye,
And streyneth folk to love,
malgre hir hede?
And then hir joye, for oght
I can espye,
Ne lasteth not the twin-
ling of an yé,
And somme han never joye til they be dede.
What meneth this? what is this mistihede?
Wherto constreyneth he his folk so faste
Chyng to desyre, but hit shulde laste?

And thogh he made a lover love a thing,

And maketh hit seme stedfast and during,
Yet putteth he in hit such misaventure,
That resteth nis ther noon in his yeving.
And that is wonder, that so just a king
Doth such hardnesse to his creature,
Thus, whether love breke or elles dure,
Al gates he that hath with love to done
hath offer wo then changed is the mone.

hit semeth he hath to lovers enmite,
And lyk a fischer, as men alday may see,
Baiteth his angle/hook with som plesaunce,
Till mony a fish is wood til that he be
Sesed therwith; and then at erst hath he
Al his desyr, and therwith al mischaunce;
And thogh the lyne breke, he hath penaunce;
for with the hoke he wounded is so sore,
That he his wages hath for evermore.

THE broche of Thebes was
of suche a kinde,
So ful of rubies and of
stones inde,
That every wight, that
sette on hit an yé,
He wende anon to worthe
out of his minde;
So sore the beaute wold
his herte binde,
Till he hit hadde, him thoughte he moste dye;
And whan that hit was his, than shulde he drye
Such wo for drede, ay whyl that he hit hadde,
That welnigh for the fere he shulde madd.

And whan hit was fro his possessioun,
Chan had he double wo and passioun
for he so fair a tresor had forgo;
But yet this broche, as in conclusioun,
Was not the cause of this confusioun;
But he that wrought hit enfortuned hit so,
That every wight that had it shuld have wo;
And therfor in the worcher was the vyce,
And in the covetour that was so nyce.

So fareth hit by lovers and by me;
for thogh my lady have so gret beaute,
That I was mad til I had gete hir grace,
She was not cause of myn adversite,
But he that wrought hir, also mot I thee.
That putte suche a beaute in hir face,
That made me to covete and purchace
Myn owne dethe; him wyte I that I dye,
And myn unwit, that ever I clomb so hye.

AT to yow, hardy knightes
of renoun,
Sin that ye be of my divi-
sioun,
Al be I not worthy so grette
a name,
Yet, seyn these clerkes, I
am your patroun;
Therfor ye oghte have som
compassioun

Of my disese, and take it noght agame.
The proudest of yow may be mad ful
tame;
Wherfor I prey yow, of your gentillesse,
That ye compleyne for myn hevinesse.

And ye, my ladies, that ben trewe and
stable,
By way of kinde, ye oghten to be able
To have pite of folk that be in peyne;
Now have ye cause to clothe yow in sable;
Sith that your emperice, the honorable,
Is desolat, wel oghte ye to pleyne;
Now shuld your holy teres falle and reyne.
Alas! your honour and your emperice,
Nigh deed for drede, ne can hir not chevis.

Compleyneth eek, ye lovers, al in fere,
for hir that, with unfeyned humble chere,
Was ever redy to do yow socour;
Compleyneth hir that ever hath had yow
dere;
Compleyneth beaute, fredom, and manere;
Compleyneth hir that endeth your labour;
Compleyneth thilke ensample of al
honour,
That never dide but al gentillesse;
Kytheth therfor on hir some kindenesse.

THE COMPLEYNT OF VENUS

THER nis so hy comfort
to my plesaunce,
Whan that I am in any
hevinesse,
As for to have leyser of
remembraunce
Upon the manhod and
the worthinesse,
Upon the trouthe, and
on the stedfastnesse
Of him whos I am al, whyl I may dure;
Ther oghte blame me no creature,
for every wight preiseth his gentillesse.

In him is bountee, wisdom, governaunce
Wel more then any mannes wit can gesse;
for grace hath wold so ferforth him
avaunce
That of knighthode he is parfit richesse.
Honour honoureth him for his noblesse;
Therto so wel hath formed him Nature,
That I am his for ever, I him assure,
for every wight preiseth his gentillesse.

And notwithstanding al his suffisaunce,
His gentil herte is of so greet humblesse
To me in worde, in werke, in contaunce,
And me to serve is al his besinesse,
That I am set in verrey sikernesse.
Thus oghte I blesse wel myn aventure,
Sith that him list me serven and honoure;
for every wight preiseth his gentillesse.